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DATES AND DAYS
IN EUROPE

DATES AND DAYS IN EUROPE

*By an American resident in London
(1914-1915)*

MRS. F. PURDY PALMER

AUTHOR OF "CALIFORNIA AND OTHER SONNETS," "OF THE VALLEY
AND THE SEA," ETC.

LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

ARRIVING in England during February, 1914, I stopped for a month in Dover and from there came up to London.

I recall the early warmth and charm of that Spring and Summer which now seem very far away, and, with them, that sense of repose to which one who has lived—as have I—a rather long and busy life, feels, for some unexplained reason, entitled.

Then, one August morning, there appeared a brief headline in the newspaper whose import every startled reader understood at a glance. There were only five words: “Britain will not desert France,” but they seemed to alter the aspect of the universe. Henceforth ease and repose, for the mind or for the body, might be suited to the inhabitants of some other planet, not, certainly, to those of our own.

A year has elapsed, and on this anniversary of

INTRODUCTION

the beginning of the War I am dwelling, in common with the multitude whose interests I have shared from day to day, on emotions which have touched the foundations of feeling, and on sentiments, hitherto undreamed of in our philosophies, which have now become a permanent part of them. And when I ask myself what are the qualities which I shall for ever associate with the England of the year just ended, I think of her sustained and self-forgetful hospitality to the refugees from a despoiled country, of the faith and charity with which occasions have been met, and of that imaginative outlook that has already given birth to the new type of courage.

F. P. P.

LONDON, *August 4th, 1915.*

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HORIZONS GREY

1914-1915

HORIZONS GREY

I

I saw white doves across the scene go by ;
Our emblematic doves most arrogant
In their white innocence that summer day
When, with proud steps and soft bright eyes
askant—

O'er an horizon grey—

They passed, with Peace, away, when suddenly
Came War, which does not stay
Its havoc-dealing hand for such as they !

II

The flutter of their wings put out the light ;
No lights were left old thoroughfares to mark ;
Nor might the moon the silver river show
Since War had plunged the world into the dark,

Confounding friend with foe,
While all besought the shelter of a night
 Wherein they might not know
The worst that death and loss can still bestow.

III

Yet since 'tis War again that rules the race,
Idle to hide, and base indeed to shrink !
For when the world is peopled by the slain
Some super-courage we must gain, to think—
 While Earth, and Air, and Main,
Their riddles dark propound for us to face—
 Of how we shall explain
Ourselves, and all that follows in our train.

IV

Of Modern Thought has come the Modern Ill ;
This mintage of unreasoned discontent,
With expectations which we coin into
The semblances of lofty sentiment ;—
 Mingling of false and true
Whose broods within our breasts the need instil
 To grasp what all pursue,
However poor our gifts or virtues few.

V

Weavers awhile we work upon life's plan,
Tracing and filling patterns in the sun,
Even to-day 'mid clouds that show no rift,
The memories of some things he has done

Man's courage still may lift ;

While Melting Pot and world-wide Winnowing Fan
Consume, and bruise, and sift,
To leave at last more gold grains as their gift.

VI

Not dreaming but awake ! A thought has spread
That through the beast in Man comes love of strife,
And lusts which he so little has refined
That "*Pourquoi suis-je venu ?*" he asks of life.

Unto the clearer mind

Consciousness unto consciousness hath said,
'Tis for thyself to find
Whereby the Virtues reproduce their kind.

VII

We'll give to Nature scrutiny with love.
Nor bind too close our joys and griefs to Earth
Lest she these griefs and joys shall dominate.
Of sense and spirit also, we, by birth,

And who may deprecate
The spirit's lonely flights when it would move
'Mid forces that create,
To seek for human hopes a better fate !

* * *

VIII

Again—again—on far horizons grey
Some barque we speak that sends a faint reply :
Strange prow she has and unfamiliar sail
With those on board who Wherfore know, and
Why.

Eager, aloud we hail !—
Then, fall to mean disquietudes a prey.
Messages cross, and fail :
The barque sails on, and other winds prevail.

August, 1914.

WAR

I

Now, through the night, no more in pride advancing,

 On downward curve we spin ;

Perceiving, by some gift our sight enhancing,

 What souls we bear within !

II

Come of an Age whose intrigues mar and deaden

 The simple sense of right,

What part is ours to play at Armageddon,

 Advantaging the Fight ?

III

If this the hour foreseen when Good and Evil

 Should close for once and all,

The force assigned for our Mistakes' retrieval

 Were crowded to the wall !

IV

Where is the road beyond the vague To-morrows
Whose coming still we trust ?
It lies where we resign, through many sorrows,
Our greed, injustice, lust.

August, 1915.

THE BRINGING OF THE SWORD

To lives at peace, enamoured of content
While prosperous tides break on a sheltered shore,
The world seems changeless, and men's aims ignore
Its spinning pace. But when an Age is rent
By storms of acquiescence and dissent,
By wild emotions never felt before,
By swift destructions—mate with mate at war—
And by alarm, and wonder, and lament—
Then, as from strings responsive to no hand,
Which chord or discord yield as we elect,
There sounds a strain whence souls at birth are
stirred ;
And from this rhythm—hard to understand,
And from these measures—idle to reject—
Life to the Law adds its compulsive word.

September, 1914.

LONDON

HIGH qualities thou hast to spare
From all that make thee fair and great,
And fortitude to lift and bear—
Like Caryatid at the gate.

Still dotes the eye on old design
Of sky-line, and of thoroughfare,
But now beyond all these 'tis mine
Thine urgencies of Thought to share.

Detached from the too literal view
This Thought, and winnowed to inform—
With all its shining residue—
The spirit that invests thy form.

June, 1915.

A GAME OF CHESS

I

With knights and pawns the lords again rehearse
Their practised game, when of its studied scheme
A seismic jar within the universe
Alters the angles of things as they seem.

II

The players smile : to them, astute and deft,
The incident means but a brief delay.
Restored with care each to the place he'd left,
Nor knight, nor pawn would know he'd slid astray.

III

But, strange to tell, the pieces thus replaced
Some new expressions wore. Each carven spear—
As if that cosmic jolt its past effaced—
Lurched forward, as for actual combat near.

IV

Their ivory eyes beneath their helmets glow ;
Their foes, their friends, upon the board they scan.
And then they speak, in new-found voices low :
“ These players never understood *our* plan ! ”

FRANCE

THOUGH she swerve from the shock of strife ;
Though she die 'mid the blows of War ;
She shall rise, as she rose before,
To the quest of truth, which is Life.
In songs of the sorrows she bore ;
In laughter with mockery rife ;
By wit which may probe as a knife,
She'll bring to the world One Word More !—
For, ever the meaning of Man
Through the ways obscure of the Plan,
Hers, singly, it is to explore !
Ironic, in realms of the Real ;
Diviner, in Realms ideal ;
She rests upon Earth but to soar.

May, 1915.

RUSSIA

SHE squanders faith ; she squanders love ;
She pities those whom others taunt—
And all her worth she'd spend to prove
How to assuage her Soul's fierce want.

Ever and more her wonder grows,
So far desire exceeds her reach.
Mere life she scorns, for spirit flows
Where life has ebbed, and fills the breach.

Her errors to the light she turns,
Condemning what she craves 'the most.
And Insincerity she spurns
As sin against the Holy Ghost.

May, 1915.

ENGLAND

ENGLAND, what may I say of thee ?—
Thou hast set thy hand to a ploughing
Whose furrow will scar the century,
Yet thou look'st not back on thy vowed.

Backward look was never for thee,
And, as ever, thy faith is sowing
The seed of thy continuity
Where the winds and the waves are flowing.

But England, England, what may be !
At thy feet are some fragments lying,
And difficult parts are writ for thee—
Yet thy mettle must bear their trying !

* * *

Long is the watch of winter-night
Wherein memory stores its learning,
And long till the Solstice nears that height
Which shall mellow this world-upturning.

Coming harvests eye may not see,
But the reapers are here, denuding
Us of outworn conformity
As they swing their sickles—intruding.

June, 1915.

ENGLAND'S DEAD

O BRAVE young hearts whose readiness gave all
That fortune promised into War's vast sum
Of sacrifice, more than the calling drum
Your ears have heard ! And now this ancient Hall
That stands in shadow, and that garden wall—
Familiar scenes to which no more you come—
Hold heavy memories which the heart benumb,
And sorrows, lesser sorrows to forestall.

The last on earth you looked from Asian shore ;
And from the baffling clouds that shared your flight.
Kind were the dawns that brought an end to strife,
And the grey waves which to their altars bore
Through nameless passage ways, your forms from
sight—
Those passage ways whereby Death led young Life.

June, 1915.

SOUL TO BODY

Out of the Soul hath sorrow sprung ;
Out of the Soul comes bliss :
Out of the Soul consent is wrung
To the deeds we do amiss.

Mated by Birth : severed by Death :
Coursing no more together,
Unto the stars this wild Soul saith,
“ What of our broken tether ? ”

EUROPE

So long a learning : yet so little learned !
One time th' empiric—finger at her wrist—
To Europe said : Be rights innate dismissed,
And power bestowed so that more power is earned.

Then Europe builded. Armed, or on her knees,
She builded, in a fury of delight
At the discovery that Might is Right,
And died, embattled for her dynasties.

From age to age the old entrenchments strong
Held out against dissuasion and assault ;
And wisdom learned the folly of revolt
Wherein the fine, the frail, survived not long.

Yet ever and anon a thought came nigh
To chosen souls whom solitudes surround—
Of Choice and Destiny this plaint profound—
What we have builded does not satisfy !

And here's an hour which may indeed disclose
The clue ! Through suffering—because of it—
Making the sacrifice which quickens wit—
What Europe would not learn, to-day she knows.

Enlightened, death confronted yet alive
And conscious that she does not live in vain,
Her soul she now invokes—no less her brain.
When half-gods go the gods themselves arrive.

July, 1915.

DANTE'S "PARADISE"

AN INTERPRETATION

LAST night, in a quiet room—
To some souls who asked,
There shone a light, through the gloom
Of a faith o'ertasked.

And there, for an hour sublime,
Were we face to face
With airs of a heavenly clime
Out of Time and Space.

Filled full was our thought within
From the Thought without :—
We listened, and grew akin
To the Host devout.

And, free from the Preconceived
With its ken so small,
We wondered to have believed
That Soul was not All !

November 10th, 1912.

NOON IN "THE WHITE
GARDEN"

C

NOON IN “THE WHITE GARDEN”

A FORMAL garden filled with sun and May,
Whereon no shadow save the dial’s lies.
The air is flaked by pear-tree blooms to-day,
And tenanted by two white butterflies.

Where by its pencilled vines the wall is lined
The plumed spiræa spreads a feathery screen ;
And, round the garden-archways close entwined,
Clematis sets its stars ’mid tender green.

White saxifrage, unchangeable, unchanged—
Taking no hue save that she always wore—
Lies at my feet, by gardeners’ arts arranged
In border mats to cover earth’s brown floor.

And tulips tall, their gaudy tints put by,
Obedient to the power which here controls,
On carpets of white pansies far and nigh
Stand firm, and upward lift their unstained bowls.

The air is warm, and all is white around ;
Columbine, candytuft, and peony.
Petunias, in a fragrant space, surround
With lavish grace the royal fleur-de-lys.

And if some spirit in this garden dwells
For which its fairest flower a form provides,
A sentiment—like incense near me—tells
That in these white-belled hyacinths she hides !

May 11th.

SNOW

THE snow falls thick and the street is still.
We'll rouse the fire and read, with a will,
Wells, or Bennett, their good and their ill
To know.

* * *

Two sparrows have hidden behind the blind—
For warmth and shelter are hard to find—
But these two sparrows do not mind !

O no !—

* * *

There's a dotted trail through the morning snow.
Some one's climbed over that fence below !
I think it's Somebody that I know !

Quite so.

* * *

Out of his habitat—taking a view—
And much preoccupied : steely blue—
That is the blue-jay—seeing it through !
Heigh-ho !—

* * *

O the wind is wearing away the snow !
The wind may come, if it likes, and blow
In my heart, and wear away its snow—
And go !—

A GARDEN ESCAPE

ONCE upon a time within a garden
Rose on slender stem a chosen flower,
Somewhat pallid under skies that harden
To a blossom's need of sun and shower.

Shrewish winds blew sometimes in this garden,
And the Aprils were not always kind,
Still it prospered, for here dwelt a warden
To his garden's welfare never blind.

Seek no annuals in this stately garden—
“ Pretty creatures, but not always true—
One mislikes vagaries one must pardon,”
Quoth the gardener, clipping close his Yew.

Then this chosen blossom brooded, brooded,
As the nights grew long and chill the dew ;
Wondrous longings upon thought intruded
Of perfections she might never view.

Something held her spirit from expanding,
Something seemed to press upon her heart ;
Little rootlets querulous demanding
Scope for freedom in a larger part.

Till one day a sprite came down the pathway,
Trolling to the borders : “ I am Fate !—
If you’ll trust me I’ll transplant you straightway !
Trust me ! ere my summons comes too late ! ”

Copper Beech and Rose of Sharon wondered,
As they watched this freakish Fate go by,
Lifting, with a touch that seldom blundered,
Slender stems and tender roots on high.



Other skies anon, with sun and shower ;
Other soil where rootlets throve apace,
And our alien blossom’s perfect flower
Lifted to the sky a fearless face.

Bells and globes the woods and banks adorning,
Lilies, Roses, for each gay parterre ;

Fringed and wingèd creatures of the morning
To the sun their passion laying bare !

* * *

But once more our alien changeling brooded ;
Self-completion had fulfilled her prayer.
Yet, as memories on her thoughts intruded,
“ This,” she sighed, “ is not my native air ! ”

POSSESSION

I

VINE on the wall of my English home,
March hath brought thee a draught of wine !
Drink of the cup, with its beaded foam,
To the day of thy life, O Vine !

II

The wall is high and its stones are cold
To the touch of thy crimson tips ;—
And ever the new supplants the old
When the sun to the northward dips.

III

Swinging to feel where the west winds go ;
Swaying to follow the blackbird's call ;
Everything tells thee the world to know
Is the world outside of thy wall !

IV

Yet still to its stones thy buds are pressed,
And thy heart holds never a doubt
That constancy to thy wall is best,
Though the rest have not found this out !

V

And by and by when the roses fall,
And the teller of secrets is mute,
Content art thou to adorn this wall
With a glory of leaves and fruit.

VI

While the narrow gateway's breadth and length
Will be clamped around and about
With rivets, wrought of thine own brave strength,
And—closed to the world without !

1914.

TWO SONGS

WELL I remember the wild-bird's song
That was of this scene a part
When lawns were green, and the days grew long :—
“ ’Twas Youth that sang in thy heart ! ”

Ah, but I love to recall those joys—
Those notes, and my pulses' start—
“ Put them aside ! They are broken toys
That Love once left in thy heart ! ”

How strange this song, that I thought I knew !
It has lost its old-time art !
“ Wings for a flight, and a tree-top new
Keep hope alive in the heart ! ”

IN AN OLD SQUARE

COMING and going ; blurred against the rain,
Absorbing as they pass the early gloom,
I see the people, through my window-pane—
See—when the firelight falters in the room,
The posts and lintels dim that frame the Square
Clad in the vague grey dominoes they wear.

Holdings, all these, of tenantry who stirred
To bygone dreams and deeds within this street
Whose silent trees and stones have ministered
To heavy hearts and undecided feet :
The fog commemorates the multitude
That struggled here of old for fame—for food.

With reticence it speaks of that which moved
Their destinies : It lingers by the grate
To make me know where brush and pen have
proved

Their quality of flame infatuate—
The flame which thrusts a paler glow aside
When the soul's purpose and the world's, divide.

Some played perchance an unapplauded part ;
Some bore the stings and arrows which refine ;
Bold dreamers learned the treacheries of Art,
Yet through attrition struck some sparks divine !

* * *

Comes from the street a singing voice—its own !
All the street's pathos sung in baritone.

November, 1912.

THE MARCH OF THE WOMEN



FEMINISM

O WOMAN of the neolithic name—
Tragedienne of the mire and the mist—
It may not be imputed to thy shame
That once thou wast considered, and dismissed.
Impetuous huntress ! swift beside thy mate,
Nor taunted that his strength thy strength sur-
passed,
At least you never learned to fear, or hate,
Each other in that union of the Past.

* * *

O Woman of the modern human Play,
What, if within the struggle of the Prime
Your first estate was better than this last !
Prepared, but not assigned, you stand at bay—
Confronted in an equalizing time
By Man's imperious signature of *Caste* !

FANNY'S FIRST PLAY

I SAW a scene : The world was in revolt
Against its own creations ! Central stood
The author of the mischief. Silken snood
Of white she wore—prepared for the assault
The world makes on that unforgiven fault
Of probing its conventions ! Why she should—
This beauty-nurtured flower of womanhood—
Such surgery essay, made wonder halt !
The curtain fell. The lights were down. The
throng,
Absorbed and heedless, sped the Strand along.
Through April mist the citadels of State
Still in their keeping kept the toss of fate.
Its Bridges, still the ruffled river spanned,
And I, at length, began to understand.

WOMEN

FADED women, toiling at their house-tasks,
Wearying for hours that never come ;
Smiling little smiles for fear the world asks :
“ Are you tired of children and of home ? ”

Other women, with their painted pleasures ;
Helpless women with their sickly sins ;
Women with the consciousness that measures
All things from the point where Self begins.

Timid women, pondering Opinion ;
Finger-tips devoted to some Cause
Quite within their feminine dominion
For the petty good which brings applause !

Shabby women, see them passing—passing—
While the whistles hiss against the rain :
See them gather early for amassing
What is ever for another’s gain !

Working women, old and sharp and wary ;
Younger women who have known no youth ;
Dark-browed women, revolutionary
Haggard faces blurting out the truth !

Happier women, who have gained a vision,
Put their self-condolences aside,
Learned that this old world will bear revision—
Seeing each the other woman's side.

Women who can count some dear-bought conquest,
Every debt of honour reckoned twice ;
And, for those ideals which lead them farthest,
Paying calmly the Rialto's price.

Hero-spirits on the edge of morning,
Bearing torches, joining hand with hand !
Dulled to them the mocking and the warning :
They are marching by their Lord's command :

TO A BUST OF WOMANHOOD

I

GIVE us more passion, women, in your cries,
And less compression of your guarded lips :
And bravely lift those introspective eyes
To view the passing of your own eclipse.

You are thinking—you are speaking,
As in terms misunderstood !
You are blinded for the seeking
Of the key to womanhood !

II

You were not formed creative to endure
The waste of self-repression. Think ! and try
Yourselves, with difficulty, to inure
To freedom—with the freedom to deny !

For you're living—for you're speaking
In false terms misunderstood,
And they hinder all your seeking
For the key to womanhood !

III

Now let the sorrows you have hid so long
Blare forth their story of the ways you've trod :
So shall you lose that burning sense of wrong,
And in your last estate upbraid not God.

Then no longer thinking, speaking,
In false terms misunderstood,
You shall find what you are seeking
With the key to Womanhood.

ON THE PINCIAN

ON THE PINCIAN

THE leaves lie deep, but the rose never dies
Where Messalina perished. White and blue
The city of my thoughts lies spread to view—
Under the argent of December skies,
Tablet of human sorrows, there it lies.

When from this height a Tarquin on his throne
The Roman's rights denied they flung from here
Into the flood his harvests of the year ;
And to the swollen Tiber made it known
That thus, to Mars they rendered back his own.

Who holds the title now to this domain ?—
The lofty cypress, or the nameless bust,
The strolling stranger, or the crumbled dust
Of those who haunt these groves to seek in vain
The zest of old adventure once again ?

Time holds the title for these ghosts harassed
Who cast no shadow on their native sod,
And to his realms he relegates their god :
But when Time strips the Present from the Past
This field to Mars he'll render up, at last.

December, 1913.

A FAUN

HE danced for joy because the world was fair
And rhythm caught his footsteps unaware.
Too wise, too indiscreet—his only care
Was, that the fruits of mischief fell elsewhere !

Airy escape from brooding Nature's plan ;
A promise—still to be redeemed—to Man :
His loves so light we'll not too closely scan—
Those loves wherewith Love's troubles all began.

ROME,

January, 1914.

RUINS IN THE CAMPAGNA

THEY spell their story still, with letters broken,
To eyes that read them not.

'Twere all the same the words remained unspoken,
The famous deeds forgot.

Under autumnal skies when sunsets redden
Tufa with sullen stains,
They rise, unmeaning, menacing, and deaden
The Age they hold in chains.

Standing gigantic, voiceless, unassenting
To fate whose die is cast,
The wide Campagna hears their hushed lamenting
For Present and for Past.

Like blinded captives, blameless and unwilling,
They keep no count of Time.
Their mute restraint like the enforced fulfilling
Of punishment for crime.

Yet are they Roman ! They must hold their stations—

Panels, and patterned floors :
And heaven's light bathes them in the undulations
From its eternal shores.

January, 1914.

THE BAY OF SPEZZIA

OVER the waves with threatening skies
Our boat—a wind-scared sea-bird—flies
Across the foam to Lerici,
Whose sombre heights ahead I see,
Grave—with the gravity of Italy.

The jealous shore, the lonely quay,
Are reached. And there, on upward way,
Was Shelley's home. Once more I'm sure
That, of our visions, some endure.
Forgotten here to-night *La Côte d'Azur.*

February 13th, 1914.

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